Virginia Wildlife

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Features

4 September in a Salt Marsh, by Curtis Badger
Hunting Virginia's Clapper Rail

7 Fishing is Capital in Northern Virginia, by E. L. Steinkoenig
Suburban Washington's Lakes offer Top-Notch Angling

9 The Knife as Art, by Mel White
Profile of a Noted Virginia Knife-Maker

11 Mossy Creek, by Paul H. Bratton, Jr.
New Life for the Neglected Limestone Streams

13 Mid-Atlantic Waterfowl Festival, by Tom O'Connor
East Coast's Premier Wildfowl Festival is in Virginia

14 Companionship Among the Cornstalks, by Richard Groover
Social Aspects of the Year's First Season

16 The Art of Falconry Revisited, by John Traister
Dedicated Virginia Group Revives an Ancient Sport

18 Smith Mountain Gold, by Pete Elkins
Nocturnal Mining for Walleyes

21 The Fish Crow, by Dwight Chamberlain
Common Crow's Cousin Creeps Cautiously Inland

26 Friendly Hunting, Then Delicious Eating, Dove!, by Joan Cone
Succulent Recipes for this Popular Game Bird

28 Kids and Birds
Izaak Walton League Contest Winners

33 Bird of the Month, by John W. Taylor
The Mourning Dove

34 The Witch Hazel, by Dennis Anderson
A Closer Look at this Fascinating Shrub

Departments

3 Editorial

3 Letters

15 Conservationgram

22 Wildlife Kaleidescope

25 Personalities

31 Growing Up Outdoors

32 It Appears To Me

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COVER: Wood Ducks, by R. A. Knuth, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.

Editorial

MIRROR IMAGE?

A woman wrote to us recently with the observation that wild animals were becoming as obnoxious as human beings, at least those species enjoying the greatest success. She was referring to starlings, english sparrows and blue jays in particular at her bird feeder, but the comparison could be carried even further.

In recent times, those wild animals whose habits and requirements are most like those of humans have increased while those with specialized requirements have waned. To succeed in today's world an animal must be clever, aggressive, tolerant of noise and confusion and omnivorous in diet preferences. A look at the animals who fit this pattern points a finger at possums, raccoons, coyotes, Norway rats, crows, starlings, blue jays, english sparrows and pigeon — to name a few. If we look closely at these animals, we can see mirrored many human traits.

Aggressiveness and greed assure an animal's success over his more timid associates, if he is clever enough not to get caught. Tolerance of noise, filth, pollution and unesthetic surroundings are important for wildlife trying to survive and even thrive in our cities. Opportunistic eating habits assure an ample supply of something we humans provide. It may be garbage we discard, food put out for other wildlife or crops we are trying to raise for ourselves. Storm sewers form a convenient shelter for unparticular raccoons and opossums, within easy walking distance of garbage cans and uneaten pet food in our suburbs. Interstate highway bridges provide noisy, smelly, but dry nesting sites for pigeons.

Are we gradually creating a noisy, quarrelsome welfare-oriented wildlife community in and around our big cities? It is an interesting thought that the one touch of nature we cherish in our urbanized world may become so much like ourselves that we cease to find watching their antics refreshing. —HLG

Letters

MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

I am interested in studying wildlife management just for my own amusement. What texts and/or courses would you recommend?

Steve Hass
Farmville

As a first step I would recommend you obtain a copy of our bulletin "More Wildlife On Your Property" (check the bibliography for other free or inexpensive material). As a follow-up to this I suggest Practical Wildlife Management, *by George Burger, Winchester Press, 460 Park Avenue, New York, New York, 10022 at a cost of $8.95. Also useful would be* A Manual of Wildlife Conservation, *The Wildlife Society, Suite 5176, 3900 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D. C., costing $5.50. We will soon have a Virginia Wildlife Management text designed for high school Agricultural Education classes available at $1.00 per copy. —Ed.*

HEAD UP?

I would like to compliment you on the new color photographs in recent issues of your fine magazine. These enhance a wonderful publication and I heartily congratulate you.

The cover picture of the July issue shows a beautiful Osprey, but it showed a rather glaring error. It showed the Osprey carrying the fish crossways through his body. Having watched them many times over the years, I noted that they always pick up the fish and position it while either in, or leaving the water, and then carry it with the head in front and the tail in back, like an aircraft would carry a torpedo. Also, they tend to hold the fish much closer to the body.

Wm. Phillip Gibb, M.D.
Lynchburg

Thank you very much for your letter. We are forwarding it to the Osprey in question. —Ed.

A SPECIAL MESSAGE TO OUR READERS:

In your August issue of *Virginia Wildlife* there was a special questionnaire section. The two reader surveys in this pull-out section were designed to give us greater insight into your preferences concerning both *Virginia Wildlife* itself and directions you want wildlife management in our state to take.

If you haven't already done so, please take the time now to complete either one or both of the questionnaires.

By doing this, you will be helping us to be as responsive as we can be to your needs and desires. —Ed.

SNEAKY DEER?

I would like to share with the readers an experience I had with a deer near my home. I was walking down a powerline next to my house when I spotted a deer about 150 yards ahead. He was feeding in high grass so I was able to stalk within 50 feet without him being spooked. The deer was now moving directly ahead of me into the open. I dropped flat on the ground remained perfectly still. He regarded me a few moments then continued feeding. Every now and then he lifted his head to watch me.

He crossed into some high grass to my right and walked unseen to about 10 feet. He must have caught my scent then because he gave a loud snort, took 2 bounds in the air, and ran a short distance down the powerline. He then turned around and ran right back to about 25 feet from where I lay and stood there snorting and stomping his front feet. It repeated the same procedure of running, coming back and standing there snorting and stomping. He finally ran into the woods as I stood up and started back for home. I was promptly startled by a snort from the deer I had been just watching. He had circled around and had been observing me from behind. He finally ran away snorting till I could no longer hear him.

James Harper
Midlothian

September in a Saltmarsh

By CURTIS BADGER

If a marsh hen played halfback for the Washington Redskins, the Monday night play-by-play might go something like this:

"Well Howard, he's done it again. The marsh hen has pulled out another one for the Skins, and as usual he's done it in his own unspectacular but effective way."

"Indeed he has, Giff. As I've said so many times before, the marsh hen is truly a great one. In my humble but extremely erudite opinion, the marsh hen will one day go down in NFL history as the premier running back of all time. He doesn't have the size of a Franco Harris. He doesn't have the quickness of The Juice. What he has, Frank, is deceptive speed, and he knows how to make the most of it."

Deceptive speed. That's what Bill Sterling muttered as he emptied his Browning autoloader at a marsh hen flying unspectacularly but very effectively into the distance.

We were hunting marsh hens (clapper rail to purists) on Virginia's Eastern Shore near the seaside town of Wachapreague, which for some years has prided itself on being the rail bird capital of the east coast. It was Bill's first rail hunt, and to be perfectly frank, I think he was approaching it with more than a moderate degree of disdain. Like most of us who hunt in Virginia's coastal wetlands, he had heard the marsh hen maligned as a game bird too many times.

But it only took Bill about 20 minutes to gain a great deal of respect for the marsh hen. In that amount of time, he had shot nine times, and only one bird was in the bottom of our 12-foot jon boat. Although his average improved by the end of the hunt, there were no comments about the rail being easy to hit.

Basically, there are two ways to hunt marsh hens, by foot and by boat, and with both methods your success will depend on the cooperation of the elements. An exceptionally high tide is a prerequisite for a successful rail hunt, because at high tide water covers many of the rail's hiding places. Rail spend most of their time in the thick Spartina grasses of coastal wetlands, and unless the tide rises high enough to expose them, the birds will be nearly impossible to find.

The first step in planning a rail hunt is consulation with a good tide table. The table should tell you when the tide will be high, and also how high it will be, and this is an important factor in marsh henning. A normal high tide, one that makes 4 or 4½ feet above mean low water, will not be high enough in most locations to cover the grass and expose the birds. The prime marsh henning days come during cycles of extreme tides which push the water up 6 feet or more above the mean low mark. A strong northeast storm can also create exceptionally high tides and produce good rail hunting.

So now that the tide is way up, covering all but the tips of the marsh grass, what are you going to need to go marsh henning? If you're planning to go on foot, you won't need much more than the trusty shotgun, plenty of shells and two strong legs. If you're hunting late in the season (the season runs from early September until mid-November), a pair of hip boots of waders will be handy in warding off the chill of the cool water. Otherwise, a pair of old pants and some well-worn sneakers will suffice.

Most of the hunters I know consider marsh henning on foot a very distant second choice to hunting from a boat. For one thing, hunting on foot is very hard work. Try slogging through knee-deep mud for a few hours if you don't believe it. For another thing, your chances of success on foot have to be considered minimal. And it can be frustrating. Say you're wading along in water that's about 6 inches below the top of you hip boots. A bird flys up and you let him have it. Do you know where he'll fall? That's right. In water that's up to your belly button. It never fails.

Rail hunting on foot can be productive, though, during periods of bad weather and high tides when the birds are driven into the higher marsh where the footing is more solid and the water is not so deep. But to do it right, you're going to need a boat.

A few years back, rail hunting was more popular than it is today, and quite a few craftsmen made a living by building gunning boats — little flat-bottom skiffs that could be poled through the marsh for rail in the fall, then grassed up for duck hunting in November. If you're lucky, you might find one in some little waterfront town along the Chesapeake or on the seaside Eastern Shore. If you find one, it will probably be old, but a white cedar gunning boat built by a master craftsman should last more than one man's lifetime. If you're extremely lucky, you might even find someone who still builds the boats — someone who still hand-planes rough cedar planks and painstakingly insures perfect fit of every joint and seam.

Illustrated by "Spike" Knuth

Even if you can't find the real thing, you can join the rest of us who struggle along with our fiberglass and aluminum jon boats and our small fishing boats which are de-mothballed and pressed into use for fall rail hunting. Whatever your choice, you'll want something small enough to pole, but with enough beam to be stable. The 12-foot jon boat we use fits the bill, although it's a little too light to maneuver in a breeze.

Rail hunting by boat is a two-person sport. No matter how well coordinated you think you are, you'll find it very difficult, not to mention unsafe, to try to pole the boat and shoot at the same time. Most rail hunters go in pairs, and one hunter will pole for the hour before high tide while his partner sits in the bow and shoots. For the hour after high water, the positions are reversed.

The most effective way to find hens is to pole along a strip of marsh grass that terminates at a body of open water. The rail will swim or run, usually unseen, ahead of the boat, and they'll fly when forced into the open water.

A word of caution: it is illegal to shoot rail from a boat being propelled by a motor, so if you're using an outboard, play it safe and tilt the lower unit out of the water before beginning the rail hunt.

The rail will never win any flying races with other waterfowl; and they are often criticized as presenting too slow a target by upland gunners used to stalking explosive quail and grouse. One acquaintance recently declared that the rail flies with all the majesty of a wet dishrag.

The criticism may be warranted, but I think it is a bit unfair. The rail is not a natural flier. If given his druthers, he druther swim or run away from danger. Flight, to a rail, is a last resort. They seldom need to fly--they are good swimmers and their coloration provides excellent camouflage--therefore their flight mechanisms have not evolved to the degree of refinement of such birds as ducks and geese.

Neither is the rail difficult to bring down. Light load number 8s will do the job, although 6s and 7½s are also popular loads. Pick your favorite gauge--12, 16, 20, 28--they are all fine for rail shooting. Modified choke is the best all around choice. My favorite rail gun is a 20-gauge side-by-side that was designed for quail hunting. It has improved cylinder and modified barrels and is an efficient shotgun for marsh henning.

The sport of rail hunting lies more in pursuit than in shooting ability. If you think it sounds easy, try poling a boat against tide and wind to catch a rail that's swimming about 10 yards out-of-range. And the pleasures of rail hunting do not end with the hunt. Rail are excellent table fare. Fry them like chicken and serve with wild rice and a fresh green salad. They're hard to beat.

fishing is CAPITAL in northern virginia

By E. L. STEINKOENIG

Northern Virginia lakes offer some of the most productive and challenging fishing found anywhere in the Commonwealth. Lakes Burke, Brittle and Orange, owned by the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, were designed and built especially for fishermen. Warmwater fishing is the primary recreation at the lakes, as sailboats and outboard motors are prohibited. Each lake has a concession facility which provides rental boats, fishing tackle, baits and refreshments. Lakes Brittle and Burke, located within 30 minutes of Washington D. C. and the Northern Virginia suburbs, are the most intensively fished lakes in Virginia. Since the number of people for every acre of impounded water in Northern Virginia is very large, and the demand for recreational facilities is high, the Commission, in cooperation with local governments, manages many impoundments built as water supply reservoirs, flood control structures, or hydroelectric facilities.

When a lake is first built, the standard practice is to establish a sport fish population as soon as there is enough water to stock the fish. The normal complement of fishes stocked is bluegill, largemouth bass, redear sunfish, and channel catfish. Then, if fisheries biologists determine there is suitable habitat, and if fish are available, a non-indigenous species (i.e. muskellunge, walleye) is also stocked.

In May of 1963, the newly constructed 218-acre Burke Lake was opened to public fishing. It is located on Route 123 in Fairfax County, between the cities of Fairfax and Occoquan. The lake is owned by the Commission and jointly operated with the Fairfax County Park Authority, which provides boat launching facilities, boat rentals, picnic areas, campgrounds, a carousel and minature train. With fishing pressure approaching 900 hours per acre of water, Burke Lake is

A typical family taking a leisurely row across Lake Brittle.

the most heavily fished lake in Virginia and among the most intensively fished lakes in the nation. Approximately 60,000 anglers try their luck each year. During 1976, fishermen carried home 8½ tons (78 lbs per acre) of sport fish from Burke. Included in this were channel catfish weighing more than 10 lbs each and more muskellunge per acre of water than any lake or reservoir in Virginia. In 1975 and 1976, one-third of all citations issued for channel catfish in the State came from Burke Lake.

Muskellunge were stocked in Burke to provide some trophy-fish angling potential. Their growth rate is rapid, and they may reach weights in excess of 75 lbs. The musky in Burke help make it possible to stock these fish throughout Virginia. Each spring biologists and hatchery personnel trap adult musky from the lake, strip the eggs and milt from the fish, and send the fertilized eggs to the Front Royal Hatchery. The resultant fry are transferred to Buller Fish Hatchery in Marion where they are raised to fingerlings and then stocked into Virginia lakes and rivers.

Located in Fauquier County, about 30 miles southwest of Washington, Lake Brittle (77 acres) was first opened to fishing in 1955. Second only to Burke Lake in fishing pressure per acre of water, Lake Brittle supports over 10,000 fishermen each year. A concessionaire provides boat rentals, bait, picnic areas, refreshments and sanitary facilities. In 1976, fishermen caught an estimated 71 lbs of sport fish per acre.

Angling for channel catfish has always been popular at Lake Brittle. Until recently, the state record for channel cats was a 26-lb, 8-oz trophy caught from Brittle. Fishermen take over 1,900 lbs of channel cats annually, that average more than 3 lbs each. The sunfish in Lake Brittle are in excellent condition and their large size provides some exciting fishing. Redear sunfish (shellcracker) average ½ lb each, black crappie average over 4/10 lb, and bluegill average 3/10 lb.

Lake Orange is a 124-acre lake that was constructed in 1963-64 and opened to fishing in 1966. The lake is located approximately 4 miles southeast of Orange, just off Route 629. A concessionaire provides boats and equipment rentals, bait, snacks and refreshments. The estimated 11,000 fishermen using Lake Orange annually catch primarily black crappie and bluegill. During 1976, anglers took home 51 lbs of crappie and bluegill per acre, a combined weight of over 6,300 lbs. Fishermen also harvest approximately 2½ tons of channel catfish each year (24 lbs per acre). The largemouth bass caught in 1976 averaged 2 lbs each.

Northern Pike, a relative of the muskellunge, were first stocked in Lake Orange in 1965. Like the musky, northern were stocked to provide some trophy fish angling potential. Northern pike can grow to weights over 30 lbs. Since 1972, 46% of the citations issued for northern pike in Virginia came from Lake Orange. Their average weight last year was over 6 lbs.

The largest lake in Northern Virginia is Occoquan Reservoir, a 1,700-acre water supply impoundment. Access to the lake, boat rentals and bait are provided at two facilities operated by the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority. Outboard motors up to 10 hp are allowed on the lake.

During 1976, some 30,000 fishermen at Occoquan Reservoir caught in excess of 60,000 fish, including a new state record northern pike. This giant northern was 42 inches long and weighed 22 lbs, 9 oz. The lake is stocked each year with northern pike and Commission personnel have caught and released northerns in the lake that weighed up to 20 lbs. The lake probably contains a few northerns that weigh as much as 25 lbs.

Occoquan Reservoir is the only lake in Northern Virginia that contains flathead catfish. The flathead is similar to the channel catfish, with one exception — it grows much larger. Even though channel catfish weighing in excess of 20 lbs have been taken from Occoquan, the flathead will easily grown to 50 lbs and more.

Situated in a picturesque location surrounded by steep, densely wooded hills is Motts Reservoir, a 160-acre water supply lake for the City of Fredericksburg. Because of the steep terrain, shore access to the lake is limited and most fishing is done from boats. The Fredericksburg Parks and Recreation Department operates a marina facility that rents boats and electric motors.

Northern pike fingerlings were first stocked into Motts Reservoir in 1975. By 1979 they should be creel

(continued on page 30)

An aerial view of Burke Lake just after opening.

THE KNIFE AS ART

By MEL WHITE

Most of us, at least those fortunate enough to be raised in the country, had a knife. We carried them in our blue jeans and they were our friends. I can still remember that day out in the orchard where we raised oranges and olives, when my grandfather gave me a pocket knife. It was a Swiss Army Knife with several blades and a corkscrew. As we sat there under the olive trees, he showed me how to use it without cutting off my fingers. It was some years later when I found the value of the corkscrew.

It was also later that I was introduced to the world of fine handmade knives. They would show up on hunts to be unsheathed for the admiring examination of fellow hunters. Most of these were impressive. Some because of their size or particularly fine workmanship. Others were admired simply because of the famous knifemaker's name. A few of these blades had particular appeal to me because they were not only beautifully crafted, but designed to be useful as well.

Recently on a trip down the North Anna with the Float Fishermen of Virginia, I saw just such a knife. I was somewhat surprised to find that it was made in Virginia by a maker named Ben A. Shelor. I made a mental note to see Mr. Shelor, since he apparently lived and worked in the Richmond area. Like many good intentions, I never got around to looking up Ben. Later, however, I learned that a local knifemaker was very interested in our hunter safety program and wanted to use one of his products to further the cause. This time I went to see Ben Shelor.

My first view of Ben Shelor was of a large bearded man leaning on the fender of his bright red four-wheel-drive pickup in front of his home in Richmond's National Battlefield Park. Somehow, the man fit into the wooded seclusion of the park, and even now, months and several interviews later, it is difficult to imagine this bear of a man anywhere but in the country.

Here, almost in the woods, Ben Shelor practices what he considers to be an "art form." And, though it is obvious that this is his means of livelihood, it is Ben's way of scratching that creative itch. "I have an urge to accomplish something," Ben says, "I want to leave some tracks on this earth."

Knives in various stages of manufacture surround a typical Ben Shelor creation.

There's no question that Ben Shelor goes about the business of knife making with just that attitude. Though I am sure that he could set up an assembly line, turn out creditable work and earn himself some big bucks, this is not Shelor's way. Every knife produced in his small shop in Battlefield Park is a unique creation. Even though it might be a knife from a pattern used time and again, the finished product is as much an individual as Ben Shelor himself.

Even the power machinery used in the manufacturing is custom made. Shelor designed and built much of what is used in his knife making process. Screaming like an airborne Concorde, the high speed belts drown out any conversation in the shop. The casual onlooker cannot help but wonder how such quality can come out of that frightening din. It starts, of course, with the choice of a good knife steel. Currently Ben is using AISI 0-1 and Crucible's 154CM for his blades. When pinned down to one or the other, Ben said that he considers "0-1 a very good knife steel that

holds an edge well and sharpens fairly easily." He is, however, using less of this material because of its low resistance to stain. "I'm now using 154CM as my standard steel," Ben says, "it resists stain and holds an edge well." He noted, however, that it was not the easiest to sharpen. But, he added, "most steel sharpens well if it is done when the blade needs it." Ben Shelor will one day be using another material in his work, as he is currently building a forge to use in the production of legendary Damascus blades. It is only fair to note, however, that it might just be some time before this is a reality as I have seen nothing come out of Shelor's shop for public view that wasn't near perfection. No more than you would expect from a man who seems to have a bit of himself invested in each knife he makes.

You also see the man in the knife design. Designs that are not numbered, but named: Alaskan Hunt, Deer Creek and Badger, to name a few. A name you can understand and a knife that feels good doing what it was designed to do. Although Shelor will make knives to your design (within limits) his creations are generally built around a particular use, most often they are as useful as they are easy to look at. "My knives are tools for the sportsmen," Ben said, "not attack knives."

Ben Shelor takes about eight hours to make what might be termed a standard knife, with others taking up to 20 hours to produce. While the blade material remains fairly constant, the handle of a Shelor knife is something else again. Neatly filed drawers of rosewood, colo bolo, deer antlers and numerous other materials suitable for a knife handle are found in Ben's shop. Nosing through them, I was startled to find the skeleton of a branch of cholla, the vicious cactus of the southwest. "Hard as nails!" he replied when I asked him about this unusual handle material. I then described a whale's tooth that I had which I thought might make a particularly fine ivory handle. Immediately Ben verbally sketched a curved blade design that would complement the natural shape of the tooth. Like many creative talents, Shelor's ideas come easily and you can feel the man's urge to put them in steel.

Ben also feels strongly about hunting and hunters. Hunting, in his opinion, is a privilige you should earn. A man of action, Ben has offered one of his hand-crafted knives as a prize in Virginia's Hunter Safety Program. Students who wish to participate will write a hunter safety motto and the winner will be awarded the knife.

I've seen the presentation knife and it is a tribute to the maker. It is typical of Ben Shelor and carries a hole in the top of the blade. "The hole represents the eye of the blade, says Ben, "and it has become my trademark."

Some aspects of Ben Shelor's brand of knife making require high speed machinery. This equipment is of Shelor's own design.

A reasonably effective method of fish counting and sampling, electrofishing uses an electric current to temporarily stun the fish. At this time fish can be counted or collected in nets for identification and study. The immobilization of the fish by the electric current is temporary and generally does not harm the fish.

Brown Trout:

Mossy Creek

NEW LIFE FOR THE NEGLECTED LIMESTONE STREAMS

By PAUL H. BRATTON, JR.

Through the rolling pastures and farmland, the stream flows swiftly between crumbling banks and occasional clumps of trees. Cattle graze an abandoned railroad grade paralleling the stream on one side, while on the opposite hill cars, trucks, and houses are centered on the busy country road.

Like hundreds of pastoral streams that wind through the Shenandoah Valley, the stream is known to only a few and seldom noticed by fishermen on their way to familiar mountain trout streams. Many of those trout fishermen would consider this stream an odd place for trout research.

The link between its potential as a trout stream and the bluegrass pastures lining the banks is more than coincidence. Both are the result of limestone that underlies the area. The limestone is a natural fertilizer. As it is worn down by water and erosion, the limestone releases nutrients that enrich both the soil and the water. Limestone-enriched streams support lush growths of aquatic plants that add oxygen to the water and harbor large numbers of insects and forage fish.

In Pennsylvania, the limestone trout streams have become the focus of the constantly evolving technique and literature of American flyfishing. In the process they have become a mecca for fishermen eager to test their skills against large, selective trout. The fame of Pennsylvania's limestone streams contrasts sharply with the anonymity of the limestone streams in Virginia.

At an October 1974 meeting of the Shenandoah Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Urbie Nash proposed that the conservation organization conduct a survey of local limestone streams and establish a project for restoring the most promising streams. Many limestone streams with the potential to support trout were found during the survey and one was chosen as a pilot project.

By late April of 1976, agreements were signed with three landowners on the stream selected for the pilot projects that allows Trout Unlimited access to conduct the research. Tests indicated the water quality was suitable for trout, although an electrofishing survey found no resident population.

The Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries provided 1500 1½-inch brown trout fingerlings for stocking as well as technical advice. In return, Trout Unlimited is providing the Game Commission with data developed during the project. Originally native to Europe and the British Isles, the brown trout were chosen for their ability to withstand pollution and higher temperatures better than the native brook trout.

During May of 1976 the brown trout fingerlings were placed in the stream. Then there was nothing left but periodic water quality tests and the wait until October when electrofishing would show if the trout hadsurvived the summer in their new home.

From June until September, rainfall was far below normal in Virginia. Many mountain trout streams were reduced to small pools connected only by trickles of water, while some streams disappeared entirely. Fortunately, one characteristic of the spring-fed limestone streams is a remarkably stable water level, usually unaffected by drought or flood.

A Saturday in mid-October was chosen for electrofishing. Early that morning 10 Trout Unlimited volunteers gathered at a stone bridge across the stream. There was already some good news concerning the trout. A Game Commission crew surveying the stream the previous day had found several brown trout. In five months they had grown from 1½ to over 6 inches, a phenomenal growth rate that outpaced even hand-fed hatchery trout.

With the arrival of Larry Mohn, a biologist with the Game Commission, chest waders were pulled on and electrofishing gear sorted and parceled out for the half-mile walk to the first testing station.

A pair of great blue herons rose from their feeding at one large limestone spring and flew downstream at the approach of the testing crews. The spring emerged into a clear pool before flowing through a channel clogged with watercress and other aquatic plants to the confluence with the main stream.

With a packframe containing a small gasoline engine and electric generator on his back, Larry Mohn stepped into the waist-deep water and began the electrofishing. In each hand he held a six-foot wand with one end attached to the generator by an electric cord and a twelve-inch metal hoop on the other end.

When the hooped ends are placed in the water electric pulses passing from one wand to the other create a force field that stuns any fish within its range. The hoops are probed into crevices and under the banks of the stream. As the fish are stunned, the current sweeps them out where they can be netted by one of the assistants following the electrofisher with a long handled net.

At least that is the theory, and it works well in small, mountain streams, but limestone streams present a challenge to the electrofisher. With the limestone stream's weedy channel and deeply undercut banks,

(continued on page 30)

MID-ATLANTIC WATERFOWL FESTIVAL

One visitor to last year's Festival here appears to be mimicing the decoys on display.

By TOM O'CONNOR

The Second Annual Mid-Atlantic Waterfowl Festival, to be held in September, is a wildfowl-oriented exposition that will be of interest to any duck hunter, art lover, carver, collecter, bird watcher or just plain curiosity seekers.

The Waterfowl Festival is produced by the Back Bay Wildlife Guild, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering interest in the folk art of bird carving, painting and photography. All the proceeds of the festival will be used towards the establishment of a wildfowl museum.

The Festival will be held at the Convention Center in Virginia Beach, a site that is located just south of Back Bay, famous for its duck and goose hunting and one of Virginia Beach's most treasured assets. The Back Bay remains one of the nations more productive hunting grounds for either the hunter or the bird watcher.

The show will include some artifacts, including antique decoys, hunting equipment, guns and other mementos of the old days of waterfowl gunning assembled from the great collections throughout the United States. Also on display will be contemporary carvings from all over the country by many of the world's leading creators of decorative carvings and many of these works will be for sale.

The Waterfowl Festival offers a closer look at an original American art form — the Wildfowl Decoy.

Friday, September 16 . . . . 2:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Saturday, September 17 . . 10:00 am to 9:00 pm
Sunday, September 18 . . . 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Convention Center, Virginia Beach — 19th and Pacific Avenue .

COMPANIONSHIP AMONG THE CORNSTALKS

By RICHARD S. GROOVER

As the air begins to cool in the early fall of the year, many hunters begin to feel a stirring sensation deep inside. As yet unaware that this is occurring, a wildlife magazine is thumbed through, shotguns and rifles that have rested for several months are taken down off the rack and thrown to the shoulder in an imitation of that perfect shot.

Suddenly, the opening day of dove season is upon us and that "stirring feeling" has grown into excited anticipation. We feverishly work out the last minute details. Which field will we go to and who is going along with us? Licenses are purchased, shells are packed in the car a week early so as not to forget them as we did last year, and those favorite boots are relaced with new strips of leather.

Many non-hunters view this display of behavior with amazement. Yet, with just a few differences, it is as old as man himself. Centuries ago, the reasons for hunting might not have been the same as today, but similar "instincts" for the hunt are in every hunter.

At present, dove hunting is a very popular sport. One might wonder why that is so, due to its difficulty. Surely, it is a frustrating sport. Someone once told me that the average bag number per box of shells is four birds. It seems impossible sometimes when we miss some of those shots.

Yet I see in dove hunting a reason, or, if you wish, a desire which compels people to practice this occasionally difficult sport. Dove hunting offers the participant an opportunity to have a communal experience with his fellow men. Comradeship, fellowship. . .these characteristics exist in the world of dove hunting.

While driving to the field we talk with each other about previous good times. In the field an invisible communication network is established to warn the person across the way of an upcoming shot. And, at the end of the day, we again collect ourselves to reflect on the success that we had. The entire dove hunting experience is mingled in an interplay of human beings participating together in a sport.

Dove hunting is a form of social communion with our fellow man. Just as early man rallied together before, during and after a hunt, we also make this an event to be shared with other people. It is this interaction with other hunters which makes the dove hunt the special event that it is.

Conservationgram

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE NOW ON NEWSSTANDS. As part of a new program to make VIRGINIA WILDLIFE available to a larger segment of the public, the magazine will change its subscription only policy and will be sold on newsstands in the future. The Tidewater area will be the first part of Virginia to feature VIRGINIA WILDLIFE on local magazine racks.

WILD TURKEY CONTEST. The National Wild Turkey Federation will sponsor the Virginia State Turkey Calling Championships and the Mid-Atlantic Open Calling Championships. Both contests will be conducted on Saturday, October 8, 1977 at the James Wood High School on Route 50 in Winchester, Virginia. Events scheduled include a calling and hunting seminar, a showing of the film "Call of the Wild Turkey" and the state calling contest which will begin at 11:00 a.m. The Mid-Atlantic Open Turkey Calling Contest will begin a 3:00 p.m. Information is available from M.N. Gradell, 402 Adahi Road, S.E., Vienna, Virginia, 22180.

BIG GAME TROPHY SHOWS ANNOUNCED. The 37th Annual Competition for Bear, Deer and Wild Turkey in the Eastern Regional and Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association Big Game Trophy Contest will be held in the Deer Park Elementary School in Newport News, Virginia on Saturday, September 17, 1977. Entries will be accepted beginning at 10:00 a.m. with the final closeout time being set at 2:00 p.m. Following judging, the Virginia Peninsula Sportsmen's Association will conduct a meeting beginning at 7:00 p.m., during which the trophies will be awarded.

The Eastern Regional Contest allows any bear or deer legally killed in Virginia during the 1976-77 hunting season (with an accepted sporting weapon EAST of the Blue Ridge and in accordance with the 1976-77 Virginia Game Laws). Entry fee: $3.00. Trophy must be accompanied by the State Big Game Tag.

The V.P.S.A. Contest is limited to Association members only. This contest covers bear, deer, and turkey legally killed in Virginia during the 1976-77 hunting season. No fees are required. However, contestant must be a bonafide member prior to the date of kill. Details for the Eastern Regional and the Virginia Peninsula contests may be obtained from Robert L. McDaniel, President, V.P.S.A., 39 Glendale Road, Newport News, Virginia, 23606.

The Western Regional Big Game Contest will be held in conjunction with the 29th Annual Sportsman's Fair and Big Game Trophy Show on October 21 and 22 in the Harrisonburg Auto Auction Building in Harrisonburg, Virginia off Exit#62 from Interstate #81. The show hours for the event will be Friday from 10:00 a.m. until 9:00 p.m.

Due to a scheduling conflict for the first time in over 30 years, this year's State Finals Contest will be different than in the past. In the past, the top five winners in each class in each Regional Contest had to be physically present at the State Finals Contest to be considered for placement on the State Winner's List. For the 1977 contest, however, the top five winners in each class and in each Regional Contest will be certified to the State Game Commission. Game Commission officials will determine the State winners based on scores submitted from each Regional Contest. State winners will be notified by the State Game Commission and receive appropriate State Certificates.

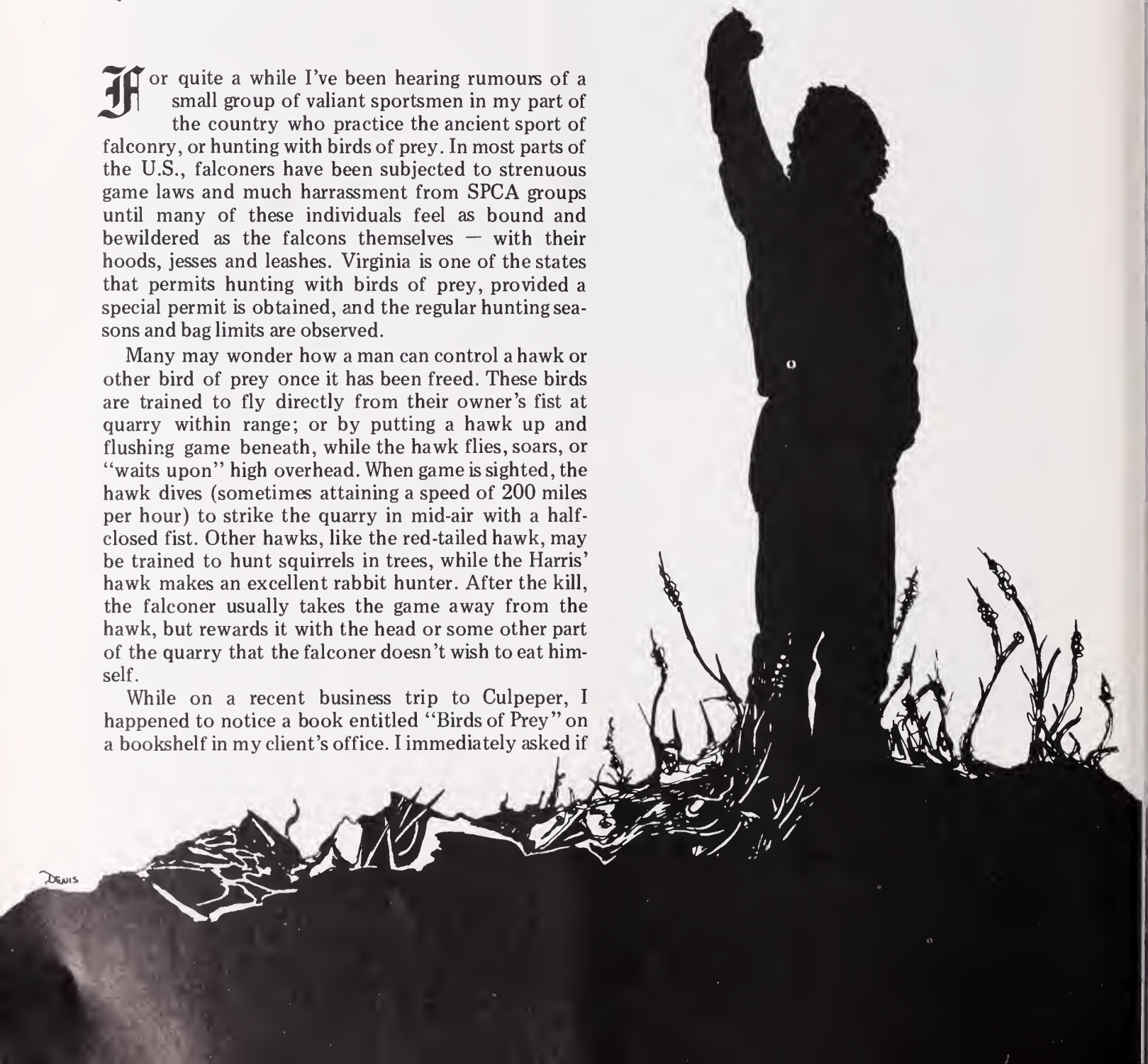
The Age of Falconry Revisited

By JOHN TRAISTER

For quite a while I've been hearing rumours of a small group of valiant sportsmen in my part of the country who practice the ancient sport of falconry, or hunting with birds of prey. In most parts of the U.S., falconers have been subjected to strenuous game laws and much harrassment from SPCA groups until many of these individuals feel as bound and bewildered as the falcons themselves — with their hoods, jesses and leashes. Virginia is one of the states that permits hunting with birds of prey, provided a special permit is obtained, and the regular hunting seasons and bag limits are observed.

Many may wonder how a man can control a hawk or other bird of prey once it has been freed. These birds are trained to fly directly from their owner's fist at quarry within range; or by putting a hawk up and flushing game beneath, while the hawk flies, soars, or "waits upon" high overhead. When game is sighted, the hawk dives (sometimes attaining a speed of 200 miles per hour) to strike the quarry in mid-air with a half-closed fist. Other hawks, like the red-tailed hawk, may be trained to hunt squirrels in trees, while the Harris' hawk makes an excellent rabbit hunter. After the kill, the falconer usually takes the game away from the hawk, but rewards it with the head or some other part of the quarry that the falconer doesn't wish to eat himself.

While on a recent business trip to Culpeper, I happened to notice a book entitled "Birds of Prey" on a bookshelf in my client's office. I immediately asked if



he was a falconer and his reply was an emphatic "yes." In fact, from then on, my client — Tayloe Griffith — talked of nothing else during my stay. When I finally had to leave, I accepted Tayloe's invitation to come back at a later date for a hunt with him.

In the meantime, I continued to inquire about the sport, primarily to see where I could procure a hawk of my own with the hopes that Tayloe would help me train it; but again I came to a dead end. It didn't take me long to find out that hawks can seldom, if ever, be purchased outright for a price. My thoughts then turned to the possibility of capturing a nestling, but a phone call to Tayloe convinced me that this wasn't the best idea.

"Nestlings are easy to find in this area during the spring," Tayloe said, "but they're a lot of trouble and hard to get into good flying condition. What you want is a good 'passage' hawk. You could probably find one through other falconers," he replied, "but the best way is to trap one during the fall migration. In fact, if you like, I'll show you how to go about it the next time you're over this way."

The word "trap" was all I needed to make certain that I found an excuse to be in Culpeper the following week. This time Tayloe took me directly to his Hawk House just outside town. Here he showed me two species of hawks; a Harris' hawk belonging to a friend, and his own squirrel-hunting red-tailed hawk. Both birds were tethered to their carpeted perch by means of swivels, jesses and leashes.

After examining the two hawks, we continued on to another room in the Hawk House where I was shown a large array of hawk furniture — most of it made by Tayloe's tackle-making friend Ron Frye. There were dozens of attractive hoods — both the Indian and Dutch style — swivels, bells, jesses, bewits, and a special scale with a block perch for weighing the hawks before and after hunting. Then I noticed a small screened cage in one corner of the room with an exotic species of quail in it.

"Are the quail going to be hawk food?" I asked, frowning as I awaited an answer.

"Not exactly," was Tayloe's reply. "They are used for bait when trapping new hawks and as a lure to get a trained hawk to come in when he wants to be contrary. But they're seldom hurt or killed during the process."

At the end of this reply, Tayloe pointed to a contraption called an automatic bow trap which was hanging from a nail on one of the building's ceiling joists. This type of trap resembled a giant steel trap. It consisted of two half-circle jaws covered with netting and hinged together to form a spread of approximately 30 inches when the trap is set. Coil springs were used to close the jaws of the trap when the trigger was hit by a bird of prey.

"See that wire basket beneath the trigger pan?" Tayloe asked. "That's where the quail or pigeon goes. When a hawk happens by and sees the bait, he'll make a dive for the quail beneath the trap. When his half-clinched talons hit the trigger pan, the jaws spring shut and capture the hawk in the netting. Since the quail is protected by the wire basket, it isn't hurt — although he probably gets the scare of his life."

The automatic bow trap is probably the simplest way to capture birds of prey that will attack live bait that can be placed in the basket. Usually, neither the bait or the hawk is injured during the trapping and since it works automatically — like the conventional steel trap — the trapper can get a considerable distance away and hide. Tayloe has used the automatic bow trap to capture dozens of hawks over the years, and only once did an accident occur.

An ordinary steel trap can also be used with good results to capture hawks provided some modifications are first made to the trap. Take a No. 0 or No. 1 long spring trap and heat it red hot in a fire and let it cool in the air to remove much of the spring temper. Then wrap each jaw well with burlap to prevent the hawk's legs from becoming injured. Even with these precautions, this type of trap should never be left unwatched. The trapper should be hidden near the trap and immediately hood, jesse, leash, and then remove the bird from the trap to prevent injury.

Alva Nye of McLean, Virginia with his Peregrine Falcon. *Photo by Jim Wilson*

In areas where sparrow hawks are present, they can be easily trapped by placing the padded steel trap on top of a pole set in an open field. Other species of

(Continued on page 24)

Smith Mountain Gold

By PETE ELKINS

In the moonless gloom, the long point was a darker line against the ebon water. The depthfinder etched the bottom, 10 flickering scarlet feet below the boat. It was summer, with the spring striper frenzy at Smith Mountain several months past. There were still stripers along the shore at night, but never as many nor so large as the monsters of March and April nights.

However, we were not looking for the silvery striped bass. We were prospecting for gold instead, in the form of delicious walleyes.

Walleyes are just another bonus for knowledgeable Smith Mountain anglers, who now have to make the difficult choice not only between striped bass and smallmouth, but walleyes as well. Fortunately, the three species often frequent the same areas after sundown.

Walleyes, traditionally a northern fish, are called "dore" over much of franco-influenced Canada. "Dore" which may be crudely translated as "golden," reflects the strikingly beautiful glint of these fish in sunlight.

Of course, walleyes are best characterized by their large, lemur-like eyes. Still, the distinctive eye only gives the fish a handy, obvious name. The walleye's golden patina gives it an unusual beauty best expressed by the simple french "dore."

Walleyes at Smith Mountain are still a rarely encountered fish from the viewpoint of a casual angler. Despite hopes of fisheries biologists, there has not yet been reliable proof of successful walleye reproduction in the lake. Yet, all the necessary spawning characteristics exist, and biologists continue to wait for the first infant walleye to appear. Even though there is as yet no proof of reproduction, the lake has a surprisingly large and healthy walleye population, thanks primarily to a well-planned stocking program.

Perhaps the major factor in the relatively low catch rate is the simple lack of knowledge by local anglers of walleye techniques. The few anglers who have studied the habits of the fish, or have caught them elsewhere have done reasonably well at Smith Mountain.

Dale Wilson, an excellent guide (PO Box 51, Huddleston, VA 24104, 703-297-5650) who operates out of Saunder's Marina, has become a specialist in night fishing. As a result, he has made contact with a lot of walleyes during the last few years.

Although Dale fishes primarily for bass and stripers, he has caught enough walleyes to make his advice worth heeding. In most areas, walleyes have a proclivity for schooling, but Dale's forays at night have resulted in scattered catches, with only an occasional flurry of action indicating the presence of a walleye school.

Dale's night efforts have been made exclusively with artificial lures since he is usually fishing for smallmouth or stripers when a walleye strikes. One point worth noting is that he often finds smallmouth and walleye feeding on similar structures at night. Usually, the two species prefer shorelines, points, underwater bars and submerged islands with an abundance of rock and hard clay. Walleye and largemouth rarely frequent the same structure.

Walleyes at night create fishing that is both exciting and challenging, filled with the always dramatic aura of nocturnal casting. The initial strike of a walleye is a hard, thudding wallop, particularly when the lure is taken on or near the surface. After the strike and initial sprint, don't expect the wild surface display of a largemouth or smallmouth, or the sustained muscle of a striper.

I vividly recall one midsummer evening with the moon on the far side of midnight when my fishing partner Larry Mathews of Lexington, caught his first Smith Mountain walleye. We had been picking up a few smallmouth and an occasional striper by casting Super Scoopers and rebels to the shoreline points near deep water. Larry cast his rebel within a foot of the shoreline. The splashing strike sounded like the proverbial canine being tossed from considerable height into the water. After a few short tugging runs, the fish circled back toward the boat. Suspecting walleye, I switched

Casting to the shoreline, especially at night, will often produce fine walleye fishing.

on a flashlight and was rewarded with a pair of glowing eyes.

Although nocturnal casting may be the most enjoyable way to catch walleyes, it is probably not the best way to catch many walleyes. Peak results would probably occur with the skilled use of live bait or a combination of jigs and live bait.

Most authoritative sources of walleye lore indicate that the fish which night anglers take at Smith Mountain are just what the results reflect: scattered fish, not schooling walleyes.

The best solution to the Smith Mountain walleye puzzle may well be an adaptation of those methods preferred in Northern walleye waters as well as the methods proven in many productive Tennessee lakes that are virtually carbon copies of Smith Mountain in terms of physical characteristics.

Tennessee anglers at walleye spots favor nightcrawler rigs or a jig tipped with a live minnow or piece of worm. These methods should be perfect for Smith Mountain, but, to my knowledge, no one has yet given the methods an extensive testing.

Before baiting up, an eager Smith Mountain walleye fan should remember certain salient features of walleyes: (1) they are school fish; (2) except at night or under periods of reduced visibility, they remain in deep water; (3) they prefer to feed over some sort of underwater structure adjacent to deep water; (4) they dote on slow-moving bait or lures; and (5) they prefer their food close to the bottom.

These characteristics promise heavy stringers for an astute practitioner of the live bait arts willing to devote some time to the effort. A complete system of live bait walleye angling has been developed in northern waters by well-known walleye and bass angler, Al Lindner. "Lindy rigs" now marketed by Ray-O-Vac, Box 488, Brainerd, Minnesota 56401, deserve careful attention by Virginia walleye anglers.

The Lindy rig consists of a long, light mono leader with a small bait holder hook rigged with a relatively snag-proof "walking sinker." The rigs are available in either minnow or nightcrawler style. One of four different sinker weights are available for fishing depths of less than 4 feet to more than 25 feet. Essentially, this live bait rig allows an angler to present his bait on the bottom in a slow, natural manner without strike-inhibiting hardware. Normally, the rig is fished by ultra-slow trolling or by drifting across underwater structure.

Jigs are also deadly walleye attractors, with or without the addition of a live minnow, piece of worm or plastic or pork rind trailer. A jig presented on light monofilament line reaches the bottom quickly, where proper rod manipulation creates an effective lure. A variation of the simple "lift and drop" retrieve is usually most effective for bottom-hugging walleyes.

Simply stated, this method entails lifting the rod tip, then dropping it back down in a pumping manner. The degree and speed of the rod lift should be varied until the walleye demonstrate some preference.

In all cases, the jig should be tied directly to the lightest practical mono without any additional hardware in the form of snaps, swivels, or weights. If additional weight is needed because of wind or depth, use a larger jig.

Jigs are normally cast, then retrieved with the lift and drop or other technique. But if conditions permit, a slow drift coupled with vertical jigging will frequently produce more fish since precise lure control is easier to maintain than in casting. Vertical jigging is already popular at Smith Mountain for striped bass, and is equally effective for walleye. In fact, many Smith Mountain anglers have landed their first walleye while jigging spoons or bucktails for stripers.

Walleyes are not only pleasantly golden in the sunlight, but are also deliciously golden when the white, flaky fillets are sauteed in butter. Indeed, the walleye may be the tastiest fish in fresh water.

Smith Mountain's walleye fishing is, like the walleye itself, a golden treasure waiting for a prospective angler with the right method to uncover the mother lode.

The Fish Crow

TWO KINDS OF CROW: THE FISH CROW AND THE COMMON CROW

By DWIGHT CHAMBERLAIN

The fish crow appears to be moving into areas of the state different from his former ocean-front home. Because of this movement, mix-ups are likely to occur between the fish crow and his brother, the common crow. They are indeed alike, yet different.

The fish crow is noticeably smaller than the common crow (approximately 2½ inches shorter) and sports color differences, as well. Specifically, it has a more glossy violet plumage and is more uniform in color than the common crow. There are no flecks of violet blue on the fish crow and very little of the "scalation effect" on the back feathers which is a conspicuous feature of the common crow.

Where both crows are found, individual flight patterns are good ways to distinguish one from the other. The fish crow may soar on slightly pointed wings, whereas the common crow is a slower, more laborious flapper, unless descending with wings slightly crooked or above the horizontal. I have seen fish crows hovering above prey on rapidly beating wings in one spot, suggestive of the American Kestrel. Common crows rarely do this. Another characteristic hunting flight (often with claws extended) of the fish crow almost mimics the deep wing angle exhibited by rock doves near their nests. I have noted this flight adaptation over an active night heron nesting rookery on Little Beach Island, part of the Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey. I have never seen common crows flapping with such a deep angle.

Fish crows use perches that common crows may avoid. For instance, fish crows commonly perch on telephone wires, roadside utility poles and streetlights, whereas, common crows rarely do. Both common crows and fish crows are omnivorous. However, fish crows do display a unique feeding adaptation while preying on diamondback terrapins, something also observed on Little Beach Island. Specifically, fish crows learned to aerially track female terrapins from the ocean to their laying burrows by learning the difference between their tracks and characteristic impressions left over the burrows after egg laying. Crows also were attracted by broken egg shells, yolk, fox and crow tracks, and other associated clues in the sand over previously wasted burrows after egg laying. Fish crows were seen digging out burrows to a depth of approximately six inches with swift sweeps of the bill.

I conducted subsequent laboratory tests which show that tame fish crows can be quickly trained to differentiate between terrapin tracks and laying impressions in the sand. I am unaware of common crows being able to do this, but I suspect that they would be able to as they are known to prey on small rodents after tracking them in the snow to their burrows.

Just listen to the crows if you are in doubt as to which species is present. The familiar deep-throated, raucous "caw" with myriad variations is a household link to the common crow. Single or continuous utterances of the fish crow are so distinctive that they can rarely be confused with the common crow. Possibly the high vocalizations of newly fledged common crows could be mistaken for fish crow sounds. Short, high-pitched nasal "cars" or a two-syllabled "ca-ha" are commonly voiced by fish crows. Single "carks" may be given in flocks, or even by singles.

During the breeding season there is a tendency for fish and common crows to select different kinds of trees for their nests. In Maryland, for example, fish crows generally chose pines for nesting, but common crows show a preference for hardwoods. In addition, the fish crow is likely to nest higher than the common crow.

The fish crow appears to be extending his range from his traditional Tidewater haunts inland and northward. A recent survey conducted by the Virginia Society of Ornithology revealed that fish crows were found in 14 out of 29 counts, while common crows were observed in all 29 counts. Fish crows were found in such inland counties as Rockingham County, Augusta County, Waynesboro and Lexington.

Illustrated by "Spike" Knuth

RETURN TO LITTLE RIVER

It is becoming increasingly hard to find a place to go hiking, without getting run over by "RV's", or rough road rigs of one kind or another. That is why I am happy to report that some kind keeper of the forest forgot (or decided) not to open the jeep trail gate at Hearthstone Lake. In the last few years erosion has made the trail almost impossible to reach. All of which becons the hiker, and deters the motorized crowd. This fresh cover gives new hope to the wildlife that so long ago was driven upstream by the din of man's "progress."

While the lack of travel into this area has allowed the old logging roads to grow over a bit, one can still imagine the hum of activity in the logging and fishing camps when this river was more than the trickle it is now.

There are plenty of places to camp here, and the walk to a suitable campsite need only be as far as you would like. The first year I was there my four year old was along, and when the pack started chafing her shoulders we simply stopped and camped. Unfortunately, we were still within earshot of the lake, but the forest had closed in and we found a quiet spot beside the small but fast running stream.

This time I coerced my wife into joining us as the load was much more comfortable to carry having been divided three ways. I might point out that the four year old is now five, and carries her own sleeping bag and gear.

Hemlock stands, that survived the last cutting, are a thick, green and aromatic cover that shades the walk which once served as a logging road. The trail crosses the river several times and fording is no more than a quick skip across the stones. It takes longer with children along since they love to stop and look. After the second or third river crossing you get that "really deep in the woods" feeling. At this point we were close enough to "civilization" to get back quickly, but far enough from the campground to at least pretend that we were in a wilderness.

The actual trail extends far up into the small valley and splits north and south to run along the south fork and north fork at approximately 2030 feet.

Also a circuit trail system over Hearthstone Ridge and ending on the northeast side of Hearthstone Lake (our starting place) is an ideal two or three day walk. The distance up the river gorge and back is about 6.4 miles. Consult USGS Map, Reddish Nob, Virginia/West Virginia, for greater detail. When we were last there, markings had just been revised as attested to by new painted bench marks along the way.

The altitude gain is almost unnoticeable, a total of +400 feet until you begin to climb the ridge for the leg home. Because of the easy nature of the terrain, a novice or softy will love this hike.

Our animal score was quite good. We saw many squirrels, a raccoon, a doe, a buck, a skunk (but not for long), several types of birds and hoards of butterflies. I have always said that where there are butterflies the world is at peace. As close as this area is

HOPE FOR

It now appears certain that the American chestnut tree can be restored to the American people.

Once it was one of the most valuable trees in forest and landscape. The beautifully grained durable wood was used for many purposes, from cribs to coffins to fences and fuel. Bark from larger trees was used to make troughs, roofing for mountain cabins. The small nuts were the sweetest of all chestnuts.

Around 1900 a fungus disease, *Endothia parasitica*, came to the United States on trees from Northern China. In less than 25 years it killed practically all the American chestnut trees on the Eastern Seaboard, covering an area from North Georgia to Michigan.

The Chinese chestnut is relatively blight resistant but cannot

THE AMERICAN CHESTNUT

nearly match the wood-producing ability of the American chestnut. Chinese chestnuts are larger but do not have the sweet flavor of the American.

Almost everything known to man has been done to find a way to prevent or cure the disease, without success, until now. Widespread effort has been expended trying to develop a disease-resistant hybrid but so far little has come from it.

Dr. Richard A. Jaynes, associate geneticist at Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, has been in the forefront of the effort to restore the American chestnut. He learned that European chestnut trees infected and dying because of the disease were making a come-back in France.

Research showed that a new and weaker strain of the fungus was inhibiting growth of the Asiatic strain. Trees with blight were beginning to get well.

Dr. Jaynes imported the new strain and found it worked on the American chestnut also. But would the new fungus spread by itself? The chestnut blight fungus can live on oak trees without hurting them, but would the new strain harm them?

Now all of that has been resolved. The disease-curing strain has been found in the United States. A woman in Michigan noticed infected American chestnut trees seemed to be healing as she was cross country skiing near her home. She sent bark samples to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station.

Laboratory studies showed it inactivates the disease-causing form in a manner similar to the European strain that had been used in the initial experiments.

These forms cannot infect healthy trees and they are able to convert the disease-causing form of the chestnut blight fungus to the disease-curing form.

The blight didn't kill the roots of the trees, only the above-ground parts. Over the years, young trees have continually sprouted from the roots. But just before they are big enough to produce nuts, the disease sets in, the tree dies, young trees sprout from the roots, and the cycle goes on and on and on.

Reprinted from News Views *a publication of the American Horticultural Society.*

The Little River, difficult to cross, but fun to play with.

Photos by the Author

to Staunton and Harrisonburg, it still was quiet as Virginia countryside should be.

Thanks to whoever decided to close that trail and provide a peaceful place for at least one family of campers. While the hiking is good, don't bring your fishing rod unless you plan to stay down at the lake and fish. The name Little River really fits. The only thing you could catch in this stream would be a few crawdads and a cold. Go for the scenery and enjoy a leisurely walk among the trees. You'll be surprised how good it feels.

— O. J. White, III

(Mr. White is an advertising executive in Richmond, Virginia and an ardent backpacker)

(Falconry continued from page 17)

hawks may also be taken this way without any bait if the traps are set in areas where hawks will be looking for game.

Another easy-to-use hawk trap that was demonstrated to me by Tayloe is known as the "noose jacket." This time a pigeon was used for bait. The leather noose jacket was fitted around the pigeon, but with two holes in the jacket to allow the pigeon's wings to be free. The jacket itself was fitted with several small catgut snares or small loops. Upon arriving at the trapping location, approximately 100 feet of chalk line was attached directly to the collar of the jacket and a small piece of wood (about the size of a pencil) tied to the opposite end of the chalk line. The pigeon was then allowed to flutter around in an open field while Tayloe and I remained hidden in the patch of woods adjoining the field, holding fast to the end of the line containing the small piece of wood.

This particular day, we ran out of time before any hawks came around, but according to Tayloe, if either a goshawk, red-tailed hawk, or Cooper's hawk had been in the area, an attack on the pigeon would have been instantaneous and probably the pigeon would have been killed just as quickly. In doing so, however, the hawk's talons become fast in the catgut loops and he takes to the air in order to rid himself of this strange contraption. When the hawk takes off, the trapper releases his end of the chalk line because too much resistance or pull on the catgut loops will pull them out of the leather jacket. The trapper merely lets the hawk fly where he chooses until the 100-foot line finally gets entangled in a bush, tree branches, or other obstacle, and forces the hawk to the ground where he is immediately captured by the trapper and hooded. Jesses and leashes are also placed on the hawk at this time before the bird is placed on a perch or log in a smooth place for the remainder of the day. The following day training begins, advancing as rapidly as the hawk will allow.

The noose jacket, while a good trap, has several disadvantages. First, the noose jacket has to be watched continuously, whereas the bow trap doesn't; the trapper may have to cover considerable ground in following the flight of the "trapped" hawk until the string becomes entangled; if the string becomes entangled around a solid or rigid object instead of a pliable one, the hawk may pull loose from the jacket and escape; and finally, in nearly all cases, the pigeon, quail or similar bait is killed when the hawk strikes.

If all of these previously-described methods seem too tame for your fancy, there's an old Indian method called the trench trap which Tayloe and his colleagues have used from time to time with success. It is especially good when used along beaches for trapping hawks. As the name implies, a trench is first dug large enough for the trapper to lay in with no part of his body protruding above ground level. The trapper is then covered — so as to be concealed from the hawk's view — but he holds a pigeon by the feet so that the pigeon is above ground and in plain view of any hawk that may pass by. When a hawk hits the pigeon with his talons, the trapper quickly grabs the hawk by the legs.

I am told that this was one method used by early American Indians to capture eagles. They would use the trench trap to capture an eagle; the tail feathers were removed for the Indian's bonnet, and then the bird was released to grow more feathers. Obviously, this method did not necessitate killing the bird to get the tail feathers.

This type of trap is definitely not for the beginner, but there is still another method of trapping hawks that should prove useful to the beginner.

This method involves the use of fine but strong linen "gill netting" (about 5' x 7') stretched between two collapsible cane poles set up so that a pigeon may be placed on the opposite side of the nest from oncoming hawks. More than one net may be necessary to cover all approach routes. A hawk coming in to hit the pigeon will become entangled before reaching the pigeon. The trapper — stationed in a well-concealed blind some 30 or 40 yards from the tray — can see all the action and hood and secure any hawks within a few seconds after it becomes entangled.

For added protection of the pigeon, it is recommended that an inconspicuous inch-mesh chickenwire guard be installed opposite the center of the net where the pigeon can be brought to rest in safety after attracting a hawk. The wire guard should be painted black for best results. It is also best to have several pigeons on hand when this method is used so that no single pigeon will have to be kept out long enough for it to become tired. Also, if one of the pigeons should be killed, you will have some spares.

Virginia has laws protecting hawks and other birds of prey, and, consequently, if you want to trap, keep, or hunt with birds of prey you must first obtain a permit. If you have gained a knowledge of falconry and can demonstrate your ability to handle and care for hawks properly, you should experience no great difficulty in obtaining the proper permits.

If you're new to the game, it would also be to your advantage to obtain a good book from the public library and read about the habits of the various species of birds of prey. From this, you should be able to tell when the species you desire will be in your area — in case it is a migrating species — and also what species will be the best for the type of game you wish to hunt.

If you know an experienced falconer, he can teach you many short cuts which otherwise might take you a long time to discover. A few hours spent in the field with these falconers can equal weeks of reading books and learning the sport by trial and error.

Personalities

Photo and text by Francis N. Satterlee

Chester F. Phelps, at the podium, responds to the address given by Lieutenant Governor John M. Dalton during ceremonies held July 30, 1977 dedicating a 4,000 acre tract in Fauquier County as the Chester F. Phelps Wildlife Management Area. In his response Phelps stated that, "there could never be any higher honor than this, a living perpetual recognition that will last longer and be of greater value than anything cast in metal or carved in stone."

Shown on the platform are, left to right, J. Kenneth Robinson, U. S. Congressman, 7th Congressional District; Lt. Governor Dalton; Jack Randolph, Game Commission Chairman; Raymond "Andy" Guest, Jr., 17th District, Virginia House of Delegates; Chester F. Phelps; Mrs. B. Ann Phelps; the Phelps' daughter, Mrs. Terry Weaver and Mr. Harry Gillam, Chief of the Commission's Education Division.

Mr. Phelps concluded his remarks by saying, "far and away, the greatest prize that life has to offer is a chance to work hard at work worth doing. I have had that opportunity thanks to all of you and the other persons and groups you represent, and I am humbly proud to accept this great honor in behalf of all of those who made it, and all of the other programs possible. I will go on for a while, but may our programs as symbolized by this Wildlife Management Area, go on and on forever, Thank you."

Friendly Hunting... Then Delicious

Doves can be easily prepared in your slow cooker, to enjoy when you return from a day of hunting.

By JOAN CONE

One early September day the phone rang, and a voice on the other end suggested, "Hey, Joan, how about you and Art joining me and some other fellows for the opening day of dove shooting?" After a long, hot summer those words were music to my ears. After all, with the beginning of dove season, can quail hunting be far behind?

It's fun. It's difficult enough shooting to be a real challenge. Best of all, dove are delicious table fare and many prefer them to quail. Because it's so warm when our Virginia season opens, it's best to dress your birds quickly whenever there's a lull in the action. If you're far from home, bring along a cooler in which to keep your birds after dressing them.

Dove are actually about the easiest to pluck of upland game birds. The feathers come out readily, and the tough skin never rips as it so often can with quail. After plucking, I cut off the wings with kitchen shears, and then split the birds up the back to remove all insides and any blood clots. Then wash them out thoroughly in cold water and dry with paper towels.

After all the time, effort, money and frustration you've had trying to bring down a rocket-like dove, you don't want to ruin them with freezer burn. You can easily prevent this by placing each cleaned dove in a sandwich bag and folding it around the bird. Then put your individually wrapped birds into a heavy plastic freezer bag and close tightly so no air can enter. By wrapping each bird separately, you can prevent sharp bones from puncturing the outer bag, and can defrost the exact number of doves you wish.

Eating! DOVE!

Now that we're ready to cook these delicate, delicious birds, remember that doves, and other game birds too, have little fat and if over-cooked without being covered, will become very tough and dried out.

This recipe is a gem because it's so easy to prepare on a camp stove afield, in a camper, or at home.

SAUTEED DOVE. Split 10 to 12 birds down the back. Dust lightly with flour to which a bit of salt has been added. Melt ¼ cup (½ stick) of butter in a heavy or Teflon-lined skillet. Brown doves quickly on skin side first, then turn and cook on bone side, then turn again. Lower heat and continue cooking until birds are ready in about 10 to 15 minutes. Remove doves to a platter and add 5 tablespoons of Madeira wine (cream sherry if you can't find Madeira) to the drippings. Turn off burner under skillet and stir well. Spoon this mixture over birds before serving.

This next recipe is convenient when you're expecting company for dinner, as your doves can be cooking while you're enjoying cocktails with your guests.

DOVE CASSEROLE
12 doves
Salt, Flour
¼-cup (½ stick) butter
½-cup white or rose wine
¼-lb fresh mushrooms sliced
(or 1 4-oz can sliced mushrooms)
Fresh parsley chopped, or parsley flakes
1-cup chicken broth or bouillon
Preheat over to 350°F. Split birds down the back, add salt to flour and dust birds lightly. Melt butter in a heavy skillet and place birds breast side down. Brown, turn and brown on other side. Remove birds from skillet and place in a casserole. Pour drippings from skillet over birds and add mushrooms, parsley, chicken broth and wine. Cover and bake for 45 minutes. Spoon the clear gravy over birds when serving.

For those of you who, like me, enjoy returning from a dove hunt to a wonderful dove dinner already prepared, try this recipe for your crockery pot or other slow cooking pot.

SLOW COOKED DOVES
8 to 10 doves
1 (1½-oz) package spaghetti sauce mix
½-cup white or rose wine
1 (1-lb) can tomatoes
1 (4-oz) can sliced mushrooms drained
Place birds in slow cooking pot. Combine dry spaghetti sauce mix with wine and pour over doves. Add tomatoes and mushrooms. Then cover and cook on low heat for 8 hours. Serve birds with spaghetti over which you pour your sauce from the crockery pot with tomatoes and mushrooms added. Later on, when quail season opens, you can cook quail right with your doves if you'd enjoy a mixed bag.

No matter how you look at it, dove hunting is fun, friendly, and a source of wonderful dining pleasure. Come on out and enjoy it with your friends.

1976 Birds

Blue Jay by
Philip Catherines, Norfolk
Grade 8

Eastern Bluebird by
Catherine Hui, Alexandri
Grade 6

Great Horned Owl by
Linda Ramer, Culpeper
Grade 12

Hawk by
Sheila Halpin, Great Falls
Grade 12

Wood Duck by
Dwight Christensen, Reva
Grade 11

Canada Geese by
Jimmy Liles, Suffolk
Grade 10

Of Virginia Contest

The 24 first-place winners of the Conservation Education Contest sponsored by the Virginia Division of the Izaak Walton League of America and the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries were recently named. A total of 134 students placed as winners in the contest.

The first-place winners received their awards in a presentation at the Capitol Building in Richmond. Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, John Dalton, congratulated the students as he gave them their awards.

Here are selected samples of the first-place winners in the photography, essay and art categories.

See our back cover for details about this year's Virginia's Small Mammals Contest.

Leslie Jo Cain
Grade 6
Carson, Virginia

"As the Susan Constant and her sister ships approached the sandy coast of Virginia, the sailors and settlers gazed at the startled flight of the pigeons which resembled 'thickened cloudes.' Was everything in this new land to be so plentiful and of such beauty?

It was the 13th of May, 1607 when the three ships emptied their cargo at Jamestown. Everywhere the birds were singing a welcome. The Indians, who watched from the forest, wore long feathers stuck in crowns of deer's hair. Some wore ear rings of bird's claws tipped with copper."

Cheryl Quesenberry
Grade 11
Hillsville, Virginia

"Swallows are like rare, beautiful children who do not know what life is, but they unquestionably squeeze out all life has inside of it's orange peel. Catch the essence, touch it if possible, for the swallow truly lives its life. To sum it up, the swallow acts as though everything he does is one big party and he is the guest of honor."

Susan A. Byrd
Grade 9
Altavista, Virginia

"Hello, my name is Robin. I am a bird and I live in Altavista, Virginia. In this Bicentennial year I thought it only right that I get to tell my story, also. You see, I was named by homesick colonists after a bird in the Old English tale 'the Babes in the Wood.' These colonists had probably been brought up on this story by John Burroughs. They named me after the only heroes in that melancholy tale. In his story Burroughs called me 'the most native and democratic' of all birds.

I am a songbird. I have a beautiful, rolling carol that is cheerful and melodious. My friends all say that I sing very well. I like to sing out strong and clear in the early morning with the rest of the chorus and more tenderly at twilight, but still be heard above all other sleepy notes.

I have been called a 'joyous and vigorous bird of the morning' by some people. I love the morning and I am often the early bird who gets the worm. Earthworms are my main food supply and I eat about sixty-eight worms a day. I enjoy various bugs also."

Cedar Waxwings by
Jimmy McKenna, Alexandria
Grade 9

(Capitol Fishing continued from page 8)

size (26 ins) and weigh between 3 and 3½ lbs. During 1976, anglers caught several chain pickerel that weighed over 4 lbs each. The chain pickerel is a cousin to the northern pike and is capable of reaching weights of 10 lbs.

Motts Reservoir is not heavily fished by local residents and during the week you encounter few other anglers. To complement the aesthetics of the reservoir, the fish caught at Motts make the experience even more pleasurable. The average weight for all panfish last year was over 3/10 lb. Most of the catch was bluegill, with contributions from black and white crappie, redear sunfish, channel catfish and largemouth bass.

In 1970, the Commission gained fishing rights to two Northern Neck mill ponds. Both Chandler's and Gordy's Mill Pond are 75 acres in surface area. The Commission helped repair the dams washed out by Hurricane Camille and restocked the ponds with bass, bluegill, redear sunfish and channel catfish.

Two water supply lakes in Stafford County were opened to fishing in 1976, although there are no concession facilities at either impoundment. Lake Able (185 acres) will be experimentally stocked with walleye in addition to the regular complement of game fishes. Walleye can grow to lengths of 36 inches and weigh as much as 25 lbs in a short period of time.

Lake Smith (100 acres) was stocked with muskellunge for the first time in 1976. Musky growth rates are rapid, especially during the first few years. The musky should be ready for harvest in 1980 and weigh about 6 lbs at that time.

The Town of Culpeper's two water supply impoundments, Pelham Reservoir (255 acres) and Mountain Run Reservoir (75 acres) were opened to fishing in 1975 and 1972 respectively. Neither lake has a concession facility. Pelham was stocked with musky in 1976, and a new fish in Virginia, the tiger musky, will be stocked into Mountain Run Reservoir. The tiger musky is a cross between the northern pike and muskellunge. They are shorter and more robust than either parent and have the distinct barred markings of the musky. The tiger musky grows faster than either parent and is a better fighter than the northern pike. Its habitat requirements are not as specific as the parent fish and the tiger musky is easier to rear in the hatchery.

Lake Manassas, an 800-acre water supply for the Town of Manassas, was opened to the public in 1976. The lake is in Prince William County, located off Burwell Road near Greenwich. There is a concessionaire who rents electric motors and row boats. No swimming or gasoline motors are allowed.

Fishing in Northern Virginia lakes is as diverse and prolific as fishing anywhere in the state. Anglers are offered everything from panfish to the challenge of creeling a trophy catfish or musky. Come and try it!

(Mossy Creek continued from page 12)

stunned fish are difficult to find and are often swept by the netter and out of range before they can be scooped up.

With the first electrofishing crew working in the spring creek, a second crew began electrofishing the main stream. Operating a battery-powered shocker, Jerry Schuder used only one wand with a net on its end. A copperclad float trails in the water behind the operator to provide the other contact point. With both shockers, rubber gloves and wading boots protect the operator and others in the stream from the electrical charges.

The knowledge that several trout had been found the previous day did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm at the sight of that first six-inch brown trout. The silver fish, speckled with olive-brown spots, was placed in a trough for measurement and then carefully replaced in the stream. The effect of the electric shock is only temporary and the fish quickly recover once out of its range.

After the first brown trout was taken and released, the crews continued up the stream netting more brown trout, some measuring over seven inches. Fifteen of the 1500 brown trout had turned up by the time the crews arrived back at the stone bridge.

Larry Mohn estimated there might be 50 brown trout in the stream. The survival rate of 1 in 30 is probably close to the natural survival rate for 1½-inch fingerlings. The rock bass, great blue herons and other predators could account for the demise of the rest.

But the most important point was proven: the brown trout that survived the summer had thrived, growing fat and healthy in the fertile limestone waters. The growth rate of from 1½ to over 7 inches in only five months is perhaps the best evidence for the great potential of Virginia's limestone streams.

During the week after the electrofishing survey, 1000 six-inch brown trout were stocked in the stream. The larger fish will be less subject to predators and help establish a self-sustaining population.

This research project is being conducted on private property that is not presently open to the public, but anyone interested in the project is welcome to accompany and assist with Trout Unlimited work crews. Jerry Schuder, Fisheries Development Director for the Shenandoah Valley Chapter, can be reached at 703-943-1964 for further information.

Although there is a long way to go in restoring Virginia's limestone streams, this research is an important first step. With sound research and individuals willing to do the restoration work, Virginia trout fishermen might someday be able to choose between fishing among the hemlocks and boulders of mountain streams or casting over the limestone waters in bluegrass pastures.

Growing Up Outdoors

Edited by Sandy Coleman

IT MAY NOT BE AS GOOD AS IT LOOKS

By LINDA ZIRKLE AUTON

Michelle switched off the television and turned to her younger brother, Michael.

"That was good. I wonder if we could live off the woods the way they did."

"I wish we could visit Uncle Sam in the country," Michael said. "I bet we could find all sorts of nuts, berries and roots to eat and leaves to make tea from."

"I know," Michelle agreed. "Here in the city we can't do anything like that."

They were silent for a moment. Then Michelle's face brightened.

"Hey, what about that vacant lot down on the corner? All kinds of things are growing down there."

"That's a great idea," Michael said. "Let's go!"

Some time later, Michael and Michelle came slowly back down the street toward their house. Leaves and roots overflowed from their arms and Michael also carried a small paper bag found at the lot. They had filled it with nuts and smaller leaves.

"What is all this?" asked their father as they started through the living room.

Michelle explained what they had seen on television. "We're going into the kitchen and try out some of this."

"Wait a minute," their father said, looking worried. "You know, some wild plants are poisonous to eat. Having lived in the city all my life, I don't know much about it."

Michelle and Michael looked at one another.

"How can we find out?" Michael asked.

"I tell you what," their father said, "The librarian might be able to help you."

Minutes later, Michelle and Michael had walked the two blocks to the library. The librarian spread the plants out on a table.

"You would have quite a stomach ache if you ate these things," the librarian said, raising her eyebrows. "Let me tell you what you have here."

A few other children who were in the library gathered around the table.

"This is poke," she said. "The young leaves are good if carefully cooked but you have also pulled up the roots. The roots are toxic."

She went on. "I see here some twigs and leaves from a cherry tree."

"Yes," Michelle said. "We were going to try to make a tea."

"It's a good thing you didn't," the librarian said. "All parts of the cherry tree are toxic except for the fruit."

She picked up some horsechesnuts and acorns. "These are poisonous, also."

Michelle and Michael looked at each other in horror. Just think what they had been about to eat!

"You should never eat anything growing outside that you are not sure of," the librarian said. "I'll tell you one thing you can eat. Does everyone know what a dandelion is?"

The children all nodded.

"The leaves of the dandelion can be eaten. They are best in the spring of the year and can be eaten as greens or made into a tea."

"I have an idea," Michelle said. She looked around at the children. "Why don't we have a Wildlife Club? Even in the city we could learn about lots of things."

"That's right," the librarian said. "I could help you."

One of the other children spoke up. "That's a good idea. Let's have our first meeting outside on the grass right now."

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO READ ABOUT?

If you could pick what you would most like to read, what would it be? We want this page to be your page.

Write to:
Growing Up Outdoors
Virginia Wildlife Magazine
P. O. Box 11104
Richmond, Virginia 23230

Send us your ideas!

IT APPEARS TO ME

BY CURLY

. . . A PERSON OUGHT TO HAVE ONE!

If you plan to head down toward Tennessee any time soon to do a little re-creating or, for that matter, should your plans call for the use of any of the Tennessee Valley Authority lakes, those folks have a free goodie for you. Seems as though they have put together a brochure which will serve as a guide to the recreation facilities and services on 25 main stream and tributary lakes.

The lakes are located in Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee. Details include a listing of boat docks, resorts, camping areas and local, state and national parks.

"Recreation on TVA Lakes" is free for the asking from TVA's Division of Forestry, Fisheries and Wildlife Development, Norris, Tennessee, 37828.

A relative of mine (and yours), Uncle Sam, has come up with some valuable free information for consumers. Apparently, "Sam" got some right thoughty folks together and they have produced The Consumer Information Catalog which is packed full of all types of information about a whole bunch of stuff. In the more than 200 publications listed, a body could learn how to fix leaky faucets, grow vegetables, cure (or prevent, I reckon) headaches and a zillion other things. Most of the pamphlets listed are free, so you can't beat the price.

If you are so inclined, drop your kin-folk a line but address it to: Consumer Information Center, Dept. A, Pueblo, Colorado, 81009 and ask for a "priceless" copy of THE CONSUMER CATALOG.

Whether you are thirsty or not when you read this really doesn't matter. . . but we may all be soon. The way things are going (and have gone this summer) water-wise could just be a very disturbing trend. In that regard, the National Audubon Society has published an interesting and informative booklet entitled Water: The Essential Resource. Single copies are obtainable from: WATER, National Audubon Society, 950 Third Avenue, New York, New York, 10022.

. . . For Your Book Shelf

The author with an especially lyrical name, Leslie Linsley, has created another lovely addition to her already famous list of "how to do it" (crafty type) books. This one Wildcrafts comes at just the right time for gathering the materials available in the outdoors for those winter-time projects. Besides, it really isn't too long until Christmas and either the book or the more than 100 projects described would be delightful gifts. If you hanker to learn about being a crafty craftmaker look for Wildcrafts at your book store. It's hard-backed with 192 pages, available from Doubleday & Co. Inc., Garden City, New York.

With the current and swelling interest in that elegant form of transportation, the canoe, an excellent source of information for the novice and old-hand alike is CANOEING which has been created recently by the American Red Cross. The 432 page book came about as the result of great popular demand for just such a publication. Although this book is designed to support the classes which are conducted by the ARC, it is so filled with good information and descriptions, that it is a great addition to any library. CANOEING is available at $3.95 from Doubleday, 245 Park Ave., New York, New York, 10017.

. . . And Then

POISON!! is a word which can get the instant attention of just about all of us, but doing something about it is quite often (and fatally) another story. Thinking that you might want to have some life-saving information available to you, let me give you some phone numbers. In Virginia you can call the Poison Center (24 hours a day) at Area Code 804-770-5123. Answering the phone will be someone who can give you some information which may save a life. For those of you who live in the Northern Virginia area, you can call (Toll Free) 1-800-492-2414 to reach the Maryland Poison Information Center.

The Mourning Dove

By J. W. TAYLOR

No voice in the chorus of North American birds is as soulful and impassioned as is that of the mourning dove, yet it has no melody to speak of, and little variation in pitch. Its charm lies solely in its expressive quality, in the intense feeling it conveys.

The mellow, long-drawn notes are uttered only by the male, and are obviously related to courtship and mating. To human ears, there is indeed a spirit of sadness, of yearning melancholy to the sound, but the birds are not in mourning. More likely, they are inspired by some avian sense of joy, desire or perhaps mere contentment. Their vocalizations do not seem to be triggered by territorial intinct, as is the case with many species.

However we try to interpret the sound, it has, undeniably, romantic connotations, and has contributed towards making the dove the symbol of peace, of gentle domesticity. This image is strengthened by their conjugal devotion and the ardor in their love making. There is always much billing and cooing.

Such carrying on seems to result in the neglect of the more practical side of housekeeping. The nest is usually no more than a flimsy platform of twigs, so loosely arranged that the eggs can be seen from beneath. Occasionally, a more substantial structure is built and doves at times will make use of abandoned nests of other birds.

Whatever the site chosen, doves make full use of the nest (providing it lasts long enough). Like the domestic pigeon, a distant relative, they are prolific and persistent breeders. In Virginia and the mid-Atlantic states, eggs may be laid anytime from March through October, and in exceptional cases as early as February. Farther south, they may be found incubating in any month of the year.

Two eggs normally constitute a full clutch, but there are records of three and even four. During most of their nest life, the young are fed by regurgitation, but solid food, in the form of weed seeds, is substituted before they are fully fledged.

After the nesting season, doves begin to congregate in favored feeding areas. Even though these flocks may number in the hundreds, the birds seem to segregate into pairs and family groups, and do not move about in large, close-knit flocks like shorebirds and waterfowl.

In the northern parts of their range, doves are migratory, moving south in colder weather. Most Virginia doves, though, are probably permanent residents, except in the higher, western part of the state. Birds there move southward, or to lower elevations, at the onset of hard weather. Dove populations in the Piedmont and Tidewater counties are augmented in autumn by the influx of northern breeders.

Taxonomists have divided the mourning dove into several races, basing their determination on slight color differences. The birds are adaptable to a wide variety of habiat, and, in one form or another, range throughout North America, Central America and West Indies.

Witch Hazel

By DENNIS ANDERSON

No, there are no witches here, only a small mixed up tree. How can a tree be mixed up? How about blooming in the fall, "shooting" it's seeds or divining water for starts! Let's see if we are both talking about the same tree.

Hamamelis virginiana is a small crooked tree, which grows to a height of about eight to fifteen feet. The leathery leaves have crenate edges (round with blunt teeth) usually three to five inches long. It is found from Canada to Georgia and west to the Mississippi. This tree grows on a variety of sites and is very common everywhere.

Enough said. Now let's see why this is an odd tree. One of the easiest ways to identify Witch Hazel in the woods is its flowers. These stand out since they appear after the leaves have fallen. The yellow petals grow long and string-like, in the fall between September and November. These yellow flowers are extremely pleasant to behold at this time of year as the forest has taken on its gray winter color. Perhaps that is one of the reasons for blooming in the fall, so its small delicate flowers have no competition that would shadow their beauty.

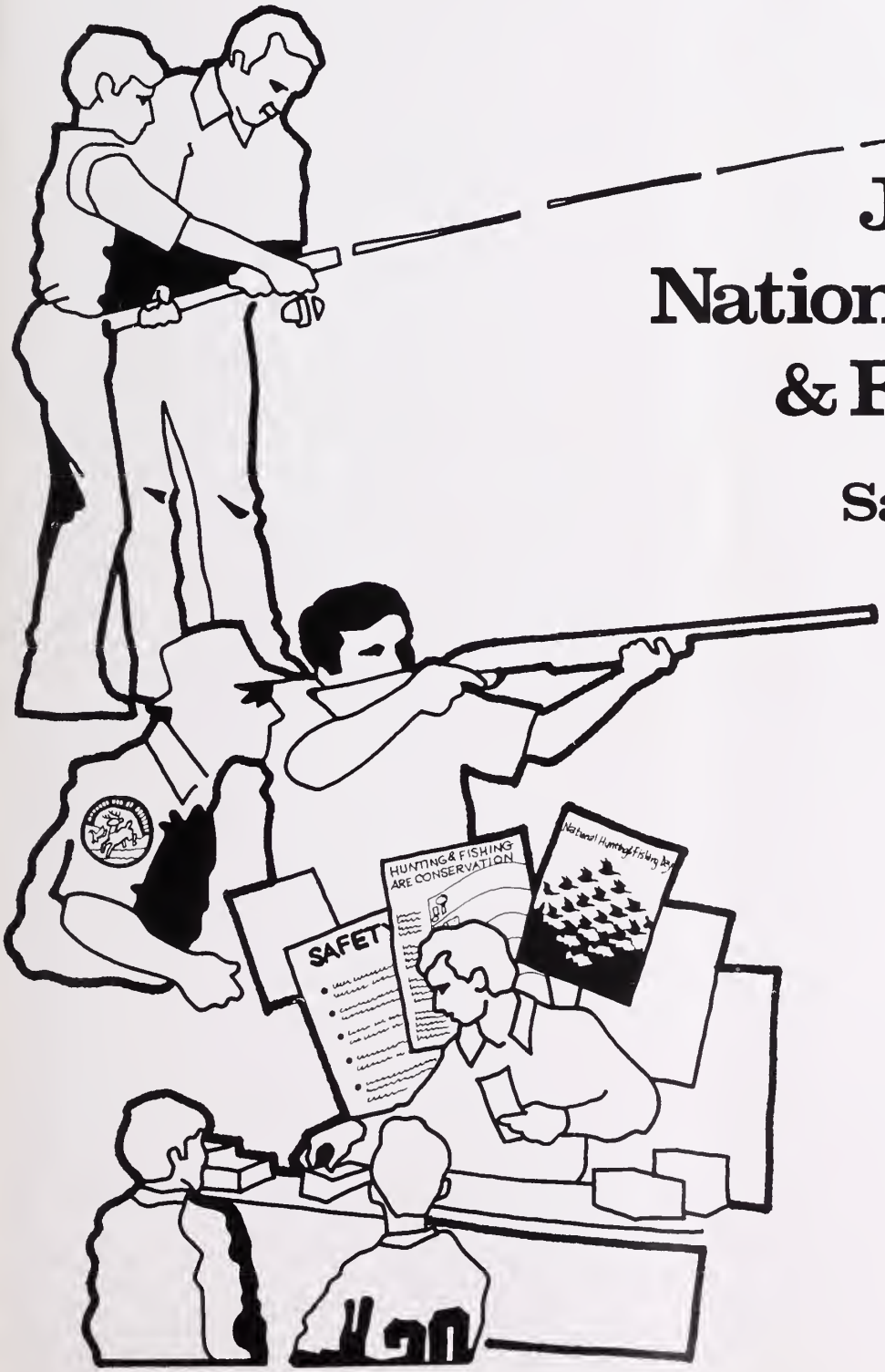
These perfect flowers (male and female organs present) produce wood like balls which mature the next growing season. For some reason, probably the drying of these capsules, shining black seeds are shot out to produce a new tree. These fertile seeds, shot several feet, are the reason Witch Hazel usually occurs in numbers. Some seed may be decimated by animals, but these black bullets are responsible for most trees.

Fall and winter seem the ideal time to identify Witch Hazel, unlike other trees. For not only are the flowers evident but the terminal bud is a giveaway also. This fuzzy brown bud looks exactly like a deer's foot.

The lore of the tree brings about its most use. Due to its small size there is no commercial wood use, however "Hazel" is held in high regard by water diviners. The "Y" shape cut from the tree carries the supposed power of locating underground water when in the proper hands. Hazel extract is also made by using the twigs, leaves and bark. This is used in various lotions for rubbing pains and bruises.

So when you run across our friend some fall day, stop and enjoy its beauty. Witch Hazel was put there for your enjoyment.

55 Million Americans can't be wrong



Join them at: National Hunting & Fishing Day

Saturday, Sept. 24

There are an estimated 55 million hunters and fishermen in the United States and in the time it takes to read this they will provide about $2,500.00 for conservation. If that surprises you, you'll be even more surprised to learn that sportsmen have been the leaders in the American conservation movement for the past 75 years — during which time they have provided conservation with over $5 BILLION.

In recognition of these contributions, and in an effort to enlist the support of all Americans in the conservation cause, 40 of the nation's leading environmental groups have set Saturday, September 24th as National Hunting and Fishing Day.

At the NHF Day program in your community, and at some 3,000 others being organized across the nation, local sportsmen's clubs and conservation groups will sponsor special displays and lectures on conservation and wildlife management. There will also be films, exhibits and free instruction in the outdoor sports.

If you want to learn how to cast, shoot or pitch a tent, or if you just want to watch a conservation movie, plan to spend an hour or so at the National Hunting and Fishing Day program in your town on September 24.

55 million Americans can't be wrong and you won't go wrong if you join them on September 24th.

$3600. IN PRIZES

FOR ESSAYS, DRAWINGS OR PHOTOGRAPHS OF

VIRGINIA'S SMALL MAMMALS

RULES:

CONTEST PERIOD: September 19, 1977 --- January 13, 1978. ELIGIBILITY: All students in Virginia schools, gra 5--12. TO ENTER: Obtain entry form from participating school or from address listed below. Student may enter in categories. Submit entry with completed from through school or directly to: CONSERVATION EDUCATI COMMITTEE (IWLA) Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, Room 100, Chetham Hall, Blacksburg, Virginia 240 ELIGIBLE MAMMALS: SKUNK, CHIPMUNK, RABBIT, WOODCHUCK, MUSKRAT, PORCUPINE, SQUIRR and OPOSSUM.

Essays

1. Essays should not exceed 750 words.
2. Essays must be limited to small mammals (see list) native to Virginia.
3. Essays will be judged on the basis of originality, effort, grammar, and grasp of the subject.

DRAWINGS

1. Drawings should be no more than 8½" X 11" for ease in sending to judges. Should be on no more than one specie of mammal.
2. Drawing may be done in charcoal, pen and ink, water colors or oils. No tracing will be permitted. Such entries will be immediately disqualified by judges.
3. Attached to drawing must be identification of mammals and brief description of its habits.
4. Drawings will be judged on the basis of likeness, effort in drawing and originality.

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Photos must have been taken by contestant. Photos submitted must be taken during contest period to be eligible.
2. Material submitted can be either in black and white or color and must be a print. No slides allowed.
3. Attached to drawing must be an identification of the mammal and brief description of their habits. Participant must include exposure data, location and type of film and lens used.
4. Photos will be judged on originality, technical excellence, effort and expression.

PRIZES:

Top winner in each grade for drawings, photographs, and essays will receive a $100.00 savings bond. Second prize winners will receive a $50.00 savings bond. Special mention prizes of $5.00 each will be divided among eligible grades in proportion to response. Top prize winners will be considered for a publication in an issue of Virginia Wildlife Magazine.

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